

Low Morale Prevalent Among Communist Troops

18. Serious morale problems among Communist units are reflected in several documents captured recently in III Corps.

19. Allied pacification and psychological warfare activities following clear-and-hold operations caused considerable difficulties to a Communist local force unit operating east of Saigon, according to two captured reports dated 29 September and 1 October. The one document states that despite "intensive indoctrination" on Communist successes, shortages of funds and provisions together with "fierce" allied attacks adversely affected the morale of the cadre and troops.

20. The reports also claim that some of the troops doubted the effectiveness of the "general offensive" tactics and became discouraged at the prospect of a protracted war. Some troops hoped that the Paris talks would bring peace, and "dissension divided the cadre ranks." Troops also deserted or abandoned their duties, according to the document.

21. A sapper battalion operating near Saigon was criticized for "poor results" during attacks in August and September according to another captured report. These results were contrasted with the relatively greater successes achieved during the Tet and May fighting and attributed to the "unstable morale" of the majority of personnel in the unit.

22. The concern with which the Communists view low morale among their forces is suggested by captured documents outlining measures to correct the problem. One Viet Cong unit issued a plan for a propaganda campaign to be conducted between October 1968 and March 1969. The purpose of the campaign, the document states, is to promote "steadfast determination to fight and win" among Communist forces and to "intensify hatred and resentment toward the enemy" among the local population.

23. A document concerning indoctrination to prevent desertion in the Dong Ngai Regiment reflects the Communist effort. The regiment, which suffered heavy casualties during the May fighting in the Saigon area, may have had particularly severe morale problems in subsequent months.

30 October 1968

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24. The document instructs cadre to convince the troops that difficulties and hardships will be only temporary and to "consolidate a strong belief in victory." Unit leaders must keep a close watch on their troops. In order to keep morale up, "particular attention should be paid to following the daily activities, attitudes, talks and arguments of all members, and action should be taken to prevent the dissemination of rumors which may affect the morale of the troops."

25. Despite such efforts, the morale of Communist troops will continue to be significantly affected by the course of the war. Captured documents have indicated that earlier this year some units were encouraged to believe that a Communist "final victory" was close at hand, and it probably will be more difficult to motivate these units for prolonged fighting.